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id: 13967  
date: 2/13/2004 16:24  
refid: 04ROME561  
origin: Embassy Rome  
classification: CONFIDENTIAL  
destination: 04ROME427|04ROME561  
header:

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 000561

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DEPT FOR WHA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/13/2014  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [CO](#) [IT](#) [HUMAN](#) [RIGHTS](#)  
SUBJECT: ITALY: COLOMBIA NEEDS TO BE BETTER UNDERSTOOD

REF: ROME 00427

CLASSIFIED BY: POL M/C TOM COUNTRYMAN FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

1. (C) SUMMARY. IN THE ITALIAN MFA'S VIEW, COLOMBIA'S PRESIDENT URIBE RETURNED TO BOGOTA WITH MIXED RESULTS FROM HIS EUROPEAN VISIT. HIS ADDRESS TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT WAS NOT WELL RECEIVED DUE TO CONTINUED EUROPEAN INSISTENCE ON BETTER PERFORMANCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW ISSUES. ALTHOUGH HE WAS ABLE TO PRESENT THE REALITIES OF COLOMBIA'S PROBLEMS AND EXPLAIN GOC POLICIES, HE DID NOT GAIN THE SUPPORT HE DESIRED FOR A DONORS CONFERENCE AND GREATER FUNDING AND COOPERATION FROM THE EUROPEANS. IN ITALY, URIBE WAS BETTER RECEIVED, GAINING COMMITMENTS FOR FUNDING IN SPECIFIC PROGRAMS, RECOGNITION FOR HIS EFFORTS AND SUPPORT FOR GREATER BILATERAL COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) DANIELE RAMPAZZO, MFA SOUTH AMERICA OFFICE DIRECTOR, STATED THAT, ALTHOUGH URIBE MAY NOT HAVE ACHIEVED TANGIBLE RESULTS IN BRUSSELS, HE DID ACHIEVE ONE OF HIS PRIMARY GOALS BY GIVING GREATER EXPOSURE TO COLOMBIA'S SITUATION, PRESENTING THE REALITIES OF COLOMBIA'S CHALLENGES AND EXPLAINING THE GOC'S POLICIES. RAMPAZZO FELT THAT URIBE'S FAILURE WITH THE EUROPEANS WAS MORE A RESULT OF A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING ON THE PART OF THE EUROPEANS RATHER THAN ERRORS COMMITTED BY URIBE. EUROPEANS ARE SWAYED BY MEDIA AND PUBLIC OPINION WHICH, IN RAMPAZZO'S OPINION, DO NOT ACCURATELY REPRESENT THE REALITIES OF COLOMBIA'S PROBLEMS AND POLICIES. FURTHERMORE, RAMPAZZO FELT THAT THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT WAS NOT PREPARED TO RECEIVE URIBE WHICH WAS EVIDENCED BY THE DIVISIONS AMONG THE PARLIAMENTARIANS.

3. (C) ALTHOUGH THE ITALIANS SHARE THE GENERAL EUROPEAN CONSENSUS THAT THE URIBE GOVERNMENT HAS TO SHOW GREATER PROGRESS AND ASSURANCES IN HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW ISSUES, THE ITALIANS HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE COLOMBIAN SITUATION DUE TO CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL SIMILARITIES. DUE TO THIS UNDERSTANDING, ITALY APPRECIATES THE CHALLENGES FACED BY THE URIBE GOVERNMENT, UNDERSTANDS THE NEED FOR STRONG GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PREFERS TO TAKE AN APPROACH OF PARTNERSHIP AND COLLABORATION RATHER THAN CONDEMNATION, RAMPAZZO STATED. ALONG WITH THE UK, SPAIN AND TO A LESSER DEGREE FRANCE, ITALY BELIEVES THAT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SHOULD APPROACH COLOMBIA AS A PARTNER IN ITS FIGHT AGAINST DRUGS AND TERRORISM AND PROVIDE THE ENCOURAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION NEEDED TO ENSURE GREATER DEMOCRACY AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND RULE OF LAW.

4. (C) RAMPAZZO STATED THAT ITALY RECOGNIZES URIBE'S EFFORTS AND BELIEVES HE IS THE BEST HOPE FOR COLOMBIA EVEN IF THE GOC IS STILL NOT IN LINE WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS. URIBE'S VISIT MAY HAVE BEEN OVERSHADOWED BY PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY HEAD ABU ALA'S CONCURRENT VISIT, BUT URIBE NEVERTHELESS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, PARLIAMENTARIANS AND ECONOMIC LEADERS AND SUCCESSFULLY ADVANCED THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP. RAMPAZZO REPORTED THAT ITALY IS COMMITTED TO ONGOING FUNDING A NUMBER OF PROGRAMS THROUGH THE UN, INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND BILATERALLY INCLUDING 250,000 EURO THROUGH UNODC FOR AN ALTERNATIVE CROPS AND FOREST RANGER PROGRAM, 1.14 MILLION EURO THROUGH IOM FOR A SOCIAL REINTEGRATION OF CHILD SOLDIERS PROGRAM, 20,000 EURO THROUGH THE OAS FOR A DEMINING PROGRAM AND 10-15,000 EURO IN SUPPORT OF THE SRSG FOR COLOMBIA. IN ADDITION TO THIS FUNDING, ITALY IS WORKING BILATERALLY ON ECONOMIC COOPERATION BETWEEN SMALL AND MID-SIZE COMPANIES IN TARGETED SECTORS SUCH AS TEXTILES, FASHION AND JEWELRY.

SEMBLER

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